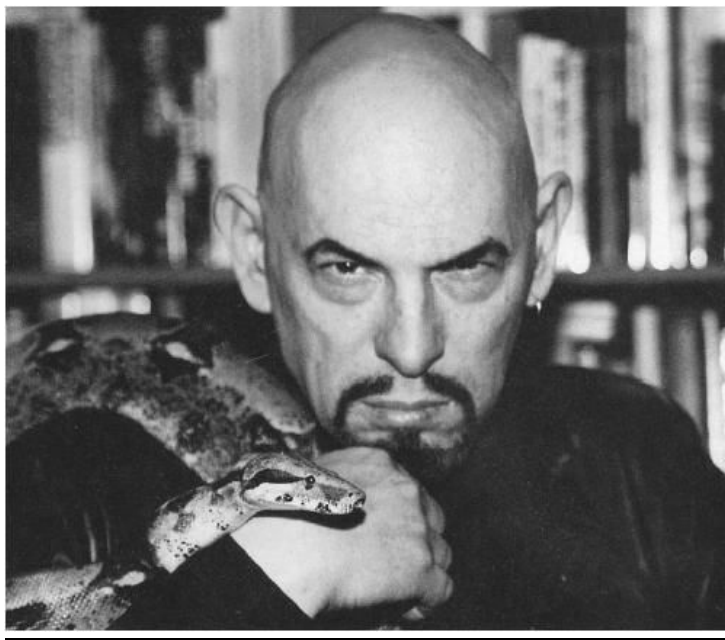


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Anton Szandor LaVey

A Devil's avatar



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group 402

Maturity Work
directed by Sébastien Graber

Collège Rousseau
October 2006

"People write fictional characters because the real thing doesn't exist."

—Anton LaVey, conversation with Blanche Barton.

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Introduction

I heard about Anton Szandor LaVey for the time in Marilyn Manson's autobiography: The Long Hard Road out of Hell. At first sight, the most striking to me was that this guy had written a *Satanic Bible*. The name sounded enthralling: fascinating and dangerous at the same time. What could be written within a *Satanic Bible*? Who was this man that we used to call the *Black Pope*?

I chose it as the subject of my Maturity Work knowing almost nothing more except the fact that LaVey was the founder of the *Church of Satan*, and author of The Satanic Bible. Therefore the structure of my work came slowly into being, only after many readings and discussions on the subject, and in fact, it never stopped evolving until the end.

Beside this, the Church of Satan being purely an american phenomenon: I had to work for the biggest part with english-written books and articles. It is basically for these reasons that my work is written in English.

The goal of my work is to study a phenomenon: Anton LaVey's Satanism ; to define it, study its particularities, its motivation and its influence. To do this I will first discuss his relation and correspondences, with past organizations and movements: to see what preceded LaVey. Then I will discuss LaVey's ideas and writings: to delve into the core of the subject. We will see then, that LaVey has had a great influence on posterior satanic movements. As my hypothesis in this study is that LaVey's charisma is one of the main causes of his fame and success, I will briefly describe his *legendary* life.

My work is composed of two parts:

The first part of this study draws a sketch of what was Satanism before LaVey. In a parallel manner, Part I also presents some symbolisms and figurations of the Devil at certain periods, which I have chosen because of their analogies with LaVey's conception. This study starts from the beginning, that is to say from the representation of Satan in the Christian Bible, and ends describing how the Church of Satan came into being.

Then the second part presents briefly the Church of Satan, and then deals with LaVey's ideas about Satan and compares them to some earlier Movement and earlier representations. One of the role of this chapter is to situate LaVey in the "history of Satanism" and to show what are his particularities. The description of LaVey's thought is also essential, to have an idea of what is really LaVey's Satanism. The second part goes on discussing LaVey's influence on modern Satanism, and thus makes a draft of a possible interpretation of LaVey's modern Satanism. Then, it ends with a brief description of LaVey's uncommon and startling life and *personality*. Which cannot be omitted in a complete study of LaVey's Satanism.

Part I

A brief history of Satanism

Even if many of the modern groups of Satanists are inspired by him and his Satanic Bible¹, the history of Satanism doesn't begin with LaVey. That is the reason why it is necessary to study his "predecessors" in order to have a global vision of what the world of satanism (and eventually occultism) looked like at the time The Church of Satan was created. To provide a background for satanism will also help us later when we will be looking for the influences different figures had on LaVey.

Here we could make two parallel studies: an investigation of the evolution of the representation of the figure of Satan in popular imagination, in popular notion (e.g. from a literate or an artistic point of view), or a investigation of the Satanist groups at different periods (from a sociological point of view). Even if both can be related, as my goal here is to situate LaVey's organisation compared with his predecessors, we will concentrate on the second one and make connections to the other when it is necessary. For this study I refer especially to two books: Enquête sur le satanisme by Massimo Introvigne² and Une histoire du diable by Robert Muchembled³.

But first of all I will begin with a brief chapter about the figure of Satan in the Bible. For this part my sources are: an article by Liliane Crété, Satan, l'ange qui a mal tourné, the Bible and articles about the Devil in Bible Dictionaries of the program BibleWork 5⁴.

Satan in the Bible:

In the Bible, He is most often called *Satan* or *the Devil* but sometimes also by other names: Tempter; Beelzebud; Belial; Great Dragon; Father of lies ... etc.

The word *Satan* comes from the Hebrew *saTan* and means *adversary*. In the Old Testament the word "satan" is used 24 times. In every case except one the word is used with its definite article (the satan). In these cases and according to its etymology the word *satan*, as a common name, is used there in a general sense. That is to say that *satan* does not refer to one specific character, but can be translated into *enemy* or *adversary*. For example that is the case in 1 Samuel 29,4, where the hebrew word *satan* has become *adversary* or *enemy* in our modern versions.

However, further, the term is used to call an angel whose role is one of an attorney accusing man before God. He observes men's behaviour and denounces to God their violations of the divine's law. For example in Job 1-2, the satan suggests to God to test the piety of Job, a very pious man:

¹ cf. Part. II.

² Massimo Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme, Satanistes et antisatanistes du XVII^e siècle à nos jours*, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Hermétisme, 1997. pp.10-11. Which treat the subject of satanism from a historical and sociological point of view.

³ Robert Muchembled, *Une histoire du Diable, XII^e-XX^e siècle*, Editions du Seuil, 2000. Which is a study of the representation of the Devil, related to culture, art (cinema, painting, comics ...etc.).

⁴ Cf. Bibliography.

"The Lord said to the satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no-one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

"Does Job fear God for nothing? the satan replied.

Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

God accepts that the satan destroys all Job owns, and kills Job's children. The satan here is not a devil, he plays the role of an accuser, an attorney and acts in order to protect God's interests. But testing Job's piety and his heart, he acts for the first time like a tempter.

In the Old Testament, it is only in 1 Chronicles 21,1 that the word *satan* appears as *Satan* (a proper name): here Satan incites David to number Israel and so provokes God's anger.

In the Old Testament Satan is not described as The Adversary of God and mankind. At first *satan* is a general term used to name an adversary, then it becomes an appellation who designates an accuser who serves and advises God. And Satan is finally pictured as we usually figure Him in the New Testament.

Nowhere in the New Testament we find any entire description of the concept, nor the doctrine of Satan. To conceive His characteristics and His work we have to recollect fragments. But His story seems to be clear, in the Apocalypse John pictures the rebellion of Satan, who can be easily identified with satan, the accuser. Historically, Satan, passes from any adversary, to an angel whose work is to accuse man in The Old Testament, to finally the revolted angel, the Adversary of God, in the New Testament.

In the apocalypse, we find the best description of Satan (Rev 12). He is described as a Great Red Dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on His heads. With His tail He draws the third of the stars from the sky to the Earth. Here, Satan is also identified with the Old Serpent that tempted Eve and the one who brought evil on Earth: *"that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray"* (that is also the case in Wis 2.23-24 / 2 Co 11, 3-15). Despite this, initially the serpent was no satanic personification, but the evangelists took it as the Devil.

The Great Dragon stands in front of a woman, who is giving birth, in order to eat her child. However God saves the baby. We find here some symbols: the stars drawn to Earth are the angels who followed Satan in His Fall (then called the demons); the woman represents Eve, who having been tempted, has also permitted the Evil in the world, and in consequence all her descendants are threatened by the Devil. But God is here offering a salvation. Satan is then defeated by the archangel Mikeal, whose name meaning in Hebrew: "the one who is like God". Satan is thrown down on Earth, and a voice warned the inhabitants of the Earth: *"The Devil has gone down to you, He is filled with fury, because He knows that his time is short"*.

This is the beginning of Satan's reign on Earth. His reign, we know, will be destroyed by God at the end of the world. The Christ has in fact already won His fight with Satan when he resisted to temptation in the wilderness. In addition, each exorcism of demons performed by Jesus is a prediction of God's future victory upon Evil.

To summarize: in the Bible Satan is the Adversary of Man and God. He tries to seduce Man to sin, and concentrates all His power to lead man to evil. He has the power of death, but only as an executionner, not as the Lord. Jew and Christian literature will then assemble all the evil under His name, and so make Him the personification of evil. As a consequence, since the 2nd century, Satan was known in the christian tradition as the King of Hell, darkness, death and sin, and governing a real empire.

During the following centuries and until the end of the first millennium the Devil was seen as an exterior (to man) and polymorphic figure. That image of a Devil who is not totally bad, that we can manipulate and take advantage of, was due to the deep-rooted pagan traditions that had never totally disappeared¹.

Then about the 11-12th centuries, Satan has been transformed into a more threatening figure: he is seen as a frightful exterior entity (a great beast/dragon) waiting for sinners in Hell for eternal torments; but also as capable to invade the body of human Being (especially of women) in order to spur them to sin².

As a result, at the end of the Middle Ages the witchcraft's processes began. The clergymen were convinced of the existence of diabolic sects of witches. The women body was seen as the home of the Devil, sexuality was therefore totally forbidden outside marriage³. These conceptions were going to last until the Enlightenment (and the witchcraft processes in western Europe stopped about the middle of the 18th century).

However the witchcraft's processes do not fit our study as they do not enter our definition of satanism. In fact, we find the origins of modern satanism in Europe during the 17th and 18th century.

The 17th and 18th centuries:

Some elements appeared at that time, for example in descriptions of Sabbat or in late demoniac possession's prosecutions, that were going to have an influence a few centuries later during the first cases of "real" Satanism. As an example in France during the 17th century in cases of possessions: some were thought to have been induced by a third: a Satanist. But more interesting: in some cases, people who were possessed (usually young women)⁴ revealed descriptions of masses celebrated by a sorcerer and into which the catholic mass was parodied: with uses of eucharistic host in sexual practices.

If some theologists and historians doubt about the reality of these accusations, these practices seem really to have existed in another case, *"the first real trial of Satanism"* according to Introvigne: the case of Catherine La Voisin, still in France, at the court of the king Louis XIV. According to the archives of the laic police of the king, whose boss was the prefect Nicolas de la Reynie, the bourgeoisie Catherine La Voisin, who kept a shop in the suburb of Paris (rue Beauregard) which officially sold cosmetics and diverse remedies, was in fact the leader of a real satanic organization governed by women. According to thorough searches, many testimonies and a long inquiry: in her shop she sold also poisons, eucharistic hosts, stolen in churches by Guibourg, a priest and a great complice of La Voisin, and also proceeded to abortions. La Voisin and Guibourg also organized black masses (this is where the term comes from), that were ordered by nobles, especially women from the court who expected to gain the king's (or an important character of the court) favor with the help of the Devil. The police found in rue Beauregard, a black chapel and a crematory which contained the remains of children's bones; La Voisin confessed that during their black masses they had carried out approximately 2000 children's sacrifices. Many of them were in fact aborted

¹ Robert Muchembled, *Diabole!*, in Historia thématique, n°98, Le Diable. De l'ange déchu à l'axe du mal Paris, novembre-décembre 2005, p.4

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ This is a part of the testimony of a nun, Magdelaine Bavent, in Louvier (France), 1647. Massimo Introvigne, *op. cit.*, p.33.

children from secret surgical interventions. But sometimes, according to witnesses, living children were sacrificed to Satan (these children had been kidnapped or even bought from poor families, hence nobody would look for them). The inquiry also mentions the use of human fat for making candles used during the ritual (the fat was given to La Voisin by an executioner), and reveals some details of the black mass: a woman laid down naked and was used as an altar, the (satanic) priest inserted an eucharistic host into her vagina and then had sexual relations with her. The client sometimes had to drink (at the chalice) a mix of sperm and feminine sexual secretions (sometime menstrual blood of the client was added). Finally the priest (oftently Guibourg) offered the child or the foetus (in sacrifice) to the Devil and implored him to realize the client's wishes.

The inquiry led to the apprehension of 319 people, La Voisin and 35 others were executed in 1680, the nobles were set free, some others were condemned to exile or to prison for life. The organisation was destroyed by the police. The motivation of La Voisin and Guibourg was simply money, as they confessed. And here is the difference between the case of La Voisin and the posterior satanic organisations¹.

The 19th century, the Romantic Movement, Huysmans:



Although the begining of the century saw what Introvigne calls "*an epidemic disease of antisatanists*"² (with writers such as Mirville, Bizouard, who denounced plots of Satanists, behind spiritistic organizations and (in Bizouard's books³) even accused the Freemasons and the Mormons of Satanism e.g.), during the 19th century in France, many writers were attracted by the figure of Satan. At the end of the 17th century Satan became a subject for literature. That had been possible, according to Muchembled, once Satan's powers began to be discredited. The doubts had been inspired by the 17th century's philophers, but the real change occured at the end of and just after the French Revolution⁴.

In 1796, as he was only nineteen years old, Matthew Gregory Lewis wrote The Monk, in which the Devil is described as an extremely beautiful young man, who is naked, wears a star on the forehead, two scorched wings on his back and smells of a delightful perfum. During the same period the painter William Blake also represented Satan as a young and beautiful angel, swerving from the usual christian representation. Lewis' magnificent Satan

¹ The story in more details *ibid.* pp.34-39

² Massimo Introvigne, *op. cit.*, pp.65-99

³ *Ibid.*, pp.90-99. The book of Bizouard cited by Introvigne : Joseph Bizouard, *Des Rapports de l'homme avec le Démon. Essai historique et philosophique*. Gaume Frères & J. Duprey, Paris, 1864.

⁴ Robert Muchembled, *op. cit.*, p.254-255.

Image: *Satan watching the Endearment of Adam and Eve*, by William Blake, 1808.

was at the origin of a trend of artists who took part in the Romantic Movement and that pictured the Devil as a beautiful fallen angel who is revolted against an unfair God¹.

Another forerunner of the Romantic Movement in its conception of Satan was the british poet John Milton. His famous The Paradise Lost (1667) is an epic poem about the fall of Satan and the temptation of Eve. The Romantics were fascinated by Milton's description of Satan, who is depicted as a proud and noble angel who prefers "*to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven*". Milton vindicated indeed rebellion and announced the romantic representation of Satan.

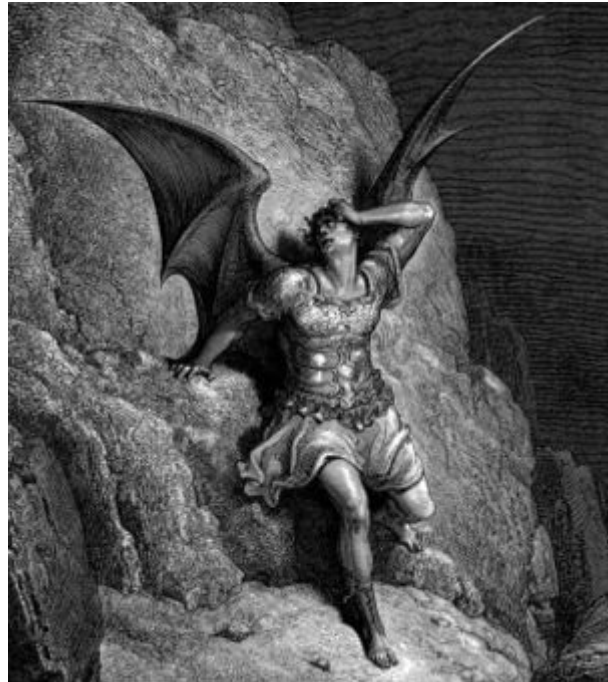
The romantic british poet Byron (1788-1824), inspired by Milton, pictured Lucifer as the stereotype of Rebellion ; Byron's Devil is indeed described as a beautiful fallen angel who is revolted against an unfair and terrible God.

Along with Byron, the entire english literature has been marked by the figure of Satan as a proud, powerful, beautiful, fallen, sad and cursed angel. The french literature tried to follow the english in that trend but in France the phenomenon did not get as much "success", even with authors such as Alfred de Vigny, George Sand, Théophile Gautier, Lamennais and Victor Hugo. Sand for example saw Satan as the God of the poor and the weak and as the archangel of legitimate revolt².

However in France, the romantic vision of Lucifer was not going to have a great posterity, as in the middle of the century the myth had lost all coherence³.

At that time Alphonse-Louis Constant began to publish books under the pseudonym *Éliphas Lévi*. His style was very different from the Romantic Movement, but he also depicted a Lucifer unfairly condemned by God, and made him the symbol of revolt and freedom. But his vision of Satan evolved and then he imagined Him as a positive spiritual force. Lévi's books were mainly about occultism and magic, and even if he was despised by the leaders of esoteric societies he received a lot of success among the "common" public, and in the last decades of the century occultism and spiritism had become fashionable. Plenty of authors were interested in these themes: Stanislas de Guaita, Papus, Mallarmé, Mendès, Huysmans...etc.

Joris-Karl Huysmans published in 1890 the novel Là-bas into which he described Satanism as it was at his time, including a black mass. The main character, Durtal, is led by Hyacinthe Chantelouve to an ancient convent where women from the high society are gathering together with homosexuals:



¹ Robert Muchembled, *Une histoire du Diable*, op. cit., p.255.

² *Ibid.* p.261-264

³ *Ibid.* p.266

Image: Illustration of Milton's The Paradise Lost, by Gustave Doré, 1866.

*"Alors l'autel apparut, un autel d'église ordinaire, surmonté d'un tabernacle au-dessus duquel se dressait un Christ dérisoire, infâme. On lui avait relevé la tête, allongé le corps et des plis peints aux joues muaient sa face douloureuse en une gueule tordue par un rire ignoble. Il était nu, et à la place du linge qui ceignait ses flancs, l'immondice en émoi de l'homme surgissait d'un paquet de crins."*¹

Then Durtal complains about the horrible smell of the room and at the same time the defrocked priest Docre walked in, and the ceremony begins:

"Précédé de deux enfants de chœur, coiffé d'un bonnet écarlate sur lequel se dressaient deux cornes de bisons rouges, le chanoine entra. (...) Il s'inclina solennellement devant l'autel, monta les gradins, et commença sa messe.

*Durtal vit alors qu'il était, sous les habits du sacrifice, nu. (...) Docre faisait les genuflexions, les inclination médiocres ou profondes, spécifiées par le rituel."*²

Docre begins his speech in honor of Satan, glorifying crime and sins:

"Maître des Esclandres, Dispensateur des bienfaits du crime, Intendant des somptueux péchés et des grands vices, Satan, c'est toi que nous adorons, Dieu logique, Dieu juste! (...)

Soutien du Pauvre exaspéré, Cordial des vaincus, c'est toi qui les doues de l'hypocrisie, de l'ingratitude, de l'orgueil, afin qu'ils se puissent défendre contre les attaques des enfants de Dieu, des Riches! (...)

*Maître, tes fidèles servants à genoux t'implorent. Ils te supplient de leur assurer l'allégresse de ces délectables forfaits que la justice ignore ; ils te supplient d'aider aux maléfices dont les traces inconnues déroutent la raison de l'homme; (...) ils te demandent enfin, gloire, richesse, puissance, à toi, le Roi des déshérités, le Fils que chassa l'inexorable Père!"*³

Then Docre continues his discourse insulting Jesus Christ:

"Et toi, toi qu'en ma qualité de prêtre, je force, que tu le veuilles ou non, à descendre dans cette hostie, à t'incarner dans ce pain, Jésus, Artisans des supercheries, Voleur d'affection! (...) Tu as failli à tes engagements, menti à tes promesses; des siècles ont sangloté, en t'attendant, Dieu fuyard, Dieu muet! (...) Nous voudrions taper sur tes clous, appuyer sur tes épines, t'amener le sang douloureux au bord de tes plaies sèches! (...) Nazaréen maudit, Roi fainéant, Dieu lâche!

-Amen », crièrent les voix cristallines des enfants de chœur."

There begins an horrible orgy between all people participating to the mass (men, women, children ...etc.).

Huysman's sources were, according to some of his friends, a personal experience of a black mass (but some other friends of his doubted that Huysmans really witnessed such a mass), the research of his friend Jules Bois, who made inquiries in the occultism and "satanic" underworld, and finally the archives of two priests condemned for heresy by the Vatican: Vintras and Boullan. Massimo Introvigne thinks also that Huysmans might have consulted the archives concerning La Voisin.

¹ J. K. Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, Editions Plon, Paris, 1908, p.237.

² *Ibid.* p. 240

³ *Ibid.* p.240-241

The existence of satanic black mass at the time of Huysmans is not always accepted as true. But what is sure is that Huysmans' descriptions were going to be used as a model for satanic black masses during the following century.

After this infatuation for Satanism, as a reaction, revived a period of antisatanism, with the publication of a huge book from a writer called Dr Bataille: Le Diable au XIX^e siècle and a few books from a writer called Leo Taxil also about Satanism¹. They both described a huge organization of mondial Satanism: the Palladism, which was supposedly directly governed by Satan himself and whose headquarters was located in Charleston (US). The human leader of the organization was supposedly Albert Pike (who was actually an important Mason, but not a Satanist...). Supposedly was the organization behind the Freemasonry, the Mormons ...etc.

The case of Leo Taxil and Dr Bataille (who in fact was just another pseudonym of Taxil) ended with the confession of Taxil in 1897: he admitted that he had invented the whole story about Palladism and Albert Pike. This case was however a big shock, because public opinion and a part of the catholic church had begun to believe in Taxil's false revelations.

On the other hand, from a general point of view, the end of the century saw the beginning of what could be called "interiorization" of the image of the Devil². This process began at the same period as Science became interested in the exploration of the subject, and conjointly, the subconscious. This tendency becomes obvious in novels such as The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde and especially Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert-Louis Stevenson, in which he investigates the human mind and comes to conclude that an evil and good exist in everyone. Here, the primordial dualism of good and evil leaves the cosmos to invade the mind of the subject.

For some authors, the Devil is the (unconscious) symbolization by the subject of desires and compulsions coming from his unconscious that are repelled and diabolized by his conscious mind and its moral laws (God). It is the case for example of a follower of Freud, Ernest Jones, who published in New York in 1911 Nightmares, Witches, and Devils. As expected, one finds the origin of this conception in Freud's works³:

*"Pour nous, les démons sont des désirs mauvais, réprouvés, découlant d'impulsions repoussées, refoulées. Nous écartons simplement la projection que le Moyen Âge avait faite de ces créations psychiques dans le monde extérieur; nous les laissons naître dans la vie intérieur des malades où elles résident."*⁴

However this process of "interiorization" of the Devil does not mean that the traditional vision of Satan disappeared. Satan, during the 20th century, has taken many different forms. This, according to Muchembled, went along with the end of the devoted attachment to christian dogmatism and with the return of ancient traditions.

Modern Satanism appeared at the beginning of the 20th century. As we will see, these sects emphasized (still today) the importance of the fulfillment of the self and egoism, and reject(ed) all Christian moral dogmas.

¹ Leo Taxil, *Les Trois Points; Le Culte du Grand Architecte; Les Soeurs Maçonnes*. These three books are gathered in Léo Taxil, *Les Mystères de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, Letouzey, Paris, 1897

² Robert Muchembled, *op. cit.* p.275-287.

³ However, Freud's opinion about Satan is more complex. But I won't deal with that subject, which would not belong to this study.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Essais de psychanalyse appliquée, Une névrose démoniaque au XVII^e siècle*, Gallimard, 1952, p.214.

The 20th century and Aleister Crowley:

An important character of the first half of the 20th century was Aleister Crowley. Crowley in fact was not a real Satanist, he was a magician and an atheist, but his character and doctrine are important in our study, because he has had a great influence on modern magic and satanic movements. If an explanation of Crowley's whole theory would be far too long for this present study, it is nevertheless necessary to pay attention to some points of his doctrine in order to relate them later to the theories of LaVey.

First of all one must notice that Crowley was an atheist. He declared in his Liber OZ-The Thelemic declaration of rights of Man: "*there is no other god than man*". Thus he explained in his commentary on the Book of the Law¹, that the spirits he believed in and he invoked were not real independant "beings", but were parts of what he called "the secret self", which is described by Crowley, who had read Freud, as a concept close to the freudian unconscious. Crowley, who after Freud read also C. G. Jung's theory about the collective unconscious, also argued that different people could see the same spirits in the same way.

Something also interesting is the concept of "magick"² rituals intended to invoke these spirits (called the ritual of invocation), that are in fact unexistant outside the mind of the performer. The invocation here consists to identify with the spirit invoked³ (using different manners that we will not develop here). For example a magician who wants to experience great joy will look for a deity "*whose nature is Joy. He will find what he requires in Dionysos*"⁴. Here we must also pay attention to the ultimate goal of rituals according to Crowley: "*The Supreme and Complete Ritual is the Invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel*"⁵, to know the nature of (and to be then able to realize) what he called the "Great Work" or the "True Will"⁶. He added that "*all magical Rituals are particular case of this general principle*"⁷, that is to say that the goal of all rituals is finally to realize the True Will.

Next, Crowley's opinion about the Devil may be interesting for our study. Crowley did not believe that Satan really existed, even less did he believe in Satan as He is described in the Bible⁸, he even despised those who worshiped Him (for example the Satanists described in Huysmans's novel Là-bas). His critic was that worshipping the Devil from the Bible was in some ways to believe in the Bible and therefore he accused the Satanists to be in fact "disguised" Christians.

Contrary to this, Crowley used the words "Lucifer" or "Satan" to designate the phallus. As opposed to Christianity, Satan also symbolizes the reason of Man, who according to Crowley is God. And Finally Crowley sometimes named "Satan" an invoked spirit for astrological reasons⁹.

¹ Aleister Crowley, *The Law is for All. An Extended Commentary on "The Book of the Law"*, 2nd ed., Falcon Press, Phoenix (Arizona), 1986, pp.77-81.

² Crowley used to spell magick with a "k".

³ Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, Book 4.

⁴ Aleister Crowley, *Magick, in theory and in practice*, Castle Books, New York, p.12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11. For an explanation of what "The Holy Guardian Angel" is: cf. note 3.

⁶ In his commentary on the *Book of the Law*, Crowley postulates that everyone has a unique and absolute "True Will" that determines his or her proper course in life. The "True Will" comes from the "secret self" (the unconsciousness) and one can find it by an invocation of his "Holy Guardian Angel", the most important deity/spirit in Crowley theory, who will reveal its nature (of the "True Will") to the performer.

⁷ Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, *op. cit.* p. 11

⁸ Massimo Introvigne, *op. cit.* p.218

⁹ *Ibid.* pp.216-217. As the spirit is a part of the unconscious, it does not exist!

Let us conclude by saying that the influence of Crowley on some points of LaVey's theory is evident. Moreover these points are not among the less important ones. For example, the concept of Crowley's rituals and atheism, slightly modified, will be incorporated in LaVey's modern satanic theory.

From Crowley to LaVey:

Describing the way Crowley's ideas travelled before they reached LaVey will make us talk about some of the last forms of Satanism still missing in our list and will lead us to talk about a character who played a very important role in the LaVey's esoteric formation and the genesis of The Church of Satan. This man was actually the link between Crowley and LaVey's Satanism.

Aleister Crowley travelled to the United States a few times to earn some money but also to meet some of his followers in California, where a man called Wilfred T. Smith had founded a Thelemic¹ Church. In 1942 Crowley elected a man called John Whiteside Parsons (alias Jack Parsons) to be at the head of the Californian Church instead of Smith. Crowley had been impressed by Parsons' writings.

Nevertheless Parsons split from Crowley in 1948, and endeavored to set up his own gnostic Church. He was convinced to be the Antichrist and to have got the mission of preparing the coming of the Beast 666. According to Introvigne Parsons was not a real Satanist, neither an atheist magician like Crowley, but he was somewhere in-between. Effectively Parsons in his gnostic theory believed in the Trinity even if he hated Christianity, he just had his own interpretation.

Blanche Barton in her biography of her partner Anton LaVey writes that LaVey contacted Jack Parsons at the beginning of the 50's in order to purchase Crowley's books. LaVey supposedly came to the conclusion that Crowley was *"a druggy poseur whose greatest achievements were as a poet and mountain climber"*².

However it is certainly not through his readings that LaVey got the stronger influence of Crowley, it is through somebody famous in Hollywood for his anti-conformist films: the underground film maker Kenneth Anger.

Kenneth William Anglemeyer (alias Kenneth Anger) was born the 3rd February of 1927³. He played a small role in Max Reinhardt's film: Le songe d'une nuit d'été when he was only four years old. When he was 17 he directed with success his first film: Fireworks, nominated at the Festival de Cannes. At the beginning of the 50's, Anger who was fascinated by magic and occultism, became a member of the group of Jack Parsons and carefully studied the works of Aleister Crowley. He went to Sicily to visit the ruins of the thelemic abbey of Crowley and made a film inspired by Crowley: Inauguration of the pleasure Dome. Anger wrote also two books on scandals in american movie history entitled Hollywood Babylon (1965) and Hollywood Babylon II (1984).

In the 60's, every friday at midnight, Anger frequented the house number 6114 of California Street in San Francisco. That strange painted-black house belonged to a certain Anton LaVey.

¹ Thelemic means from the doctrine of Crowley

² Blanche Barton, *The secret life of a Satanist, the authorized biography of Anton LaVey*, Feral House, Los Angeles, 1990. p.61.

³ Massimo Introvigne, *op. cit.*, p.263.

At the time, LaVey held every Friday night what he termed "midnight magic seminars" on various occult topics such as vampires, werewolves, ghosts and haunting ...etc. In her book¹, Blanche Barton explains that LaVey acquired his house of 6114 California Street in 1956. Since the beginning the house and its strange occupants got publicity from local newspapers, due to the fact that for example LaVey kept first a leopard and then, after its death, a lion as house pets. LaVey and his partner of the time, Diane, organized a few times a year soirees which gathered "*a crowd of influential and eccentric people around LaVey*"². At the time, according to Blanche Barton, LaVey had been very interested in occult for about one decade, worked for the SFPD (San Francisco Police Department) as a "ghost hunter" and therefore had a reputation of a Black Magician. In the early 60's these soirees, where discussions dealt with occult topics, became public seminars which were held every Friday night. Charging a "*moderate fee*" at the door, Anton gave lectures on topics we have already mentioned.

The most famous person attending to the "midnight magic seminars" was undoubtedly Kenneth Anger. And it is therefore both Anger and LaVey who decided to form (around 1961) "The Magic Circle" with the seminars' regular attendants. The Magic Circle gathered periodically and separately from the rest of (curious and occasional) attendants, to perform rituals. According to Micheal Aquino, who was LaVey's closest collaborator until 1975, the magic circle took "*various activities and operations of formal Black Magic out of the theoretical and into the practical*"³. (It is however necessary to employ Aquino's book very carefully, because after 1975, he and LaVey split up, and Aquino founded a rival organization: The Temple of Set. So one should not rely too quickly on his objectivity, especially when he criticizes LaVey, but here it seems there are no reasons not to trust him.)

In her biography Blanche Barton mentions only once Anger's name and never acknowledges his influence on LaVey. On the other hand she briefly narrates Anger's cinematic career, his travels to Europe in pursuit of Crowley's inheritance, and discloses that Anger "*introduced LaVey to Marjorie Cameron, John [Jack] Parsons' widow*"⁴.

However, knowing that Anger was part (the most important individual) of the "circle" of very close friends around LaVey, one can infer that Anger has definitely had an influence upon the shaping of the rituals, which would then be included in the ceremony the Church of Satan.

¹ Blanche Barton, *op. cit.* pp.67-71

² *Ibid.* p.70

³ Micheal A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, private edition, fifth edition, 2002.

⁴ Blanche Barton, *op. cit.* p.75

Part II

The Church of Satan: Satan for LaVey & LaVey's Satanism

Very few people in Europe have ever heard about the Church of Satan, which is an American phenomenon. One may think that a description of the Church of Satan's activities would be out of the subject of the present work. On the contrary, my opinion is that such a part is essential, simply to understand what we are talking about. The two following chapters are just a brief presentation of LaVey's activities: their goal is not to relate each episode, but rather to enable the reader to make a general idea of what was the Church of Satan. Which is necessary to understand *LaVey's Satanism*.

The formation of the Church of Satan:

As we said in the previous part, in the 60's Anton LaVey was *just* an excentric San Franciscan. As Barton relates, LaVey was born in Chicago in 1930, but spent his childhood in California where his parents gave him a rather atheistic education. The young LaVey left home at 16 to work in a circus, at first as a cage boy, but soon (as he had a talent for music since his early childhood) as a musician. LaVey left then the circus and worked as an organist in different night-clubs and bars, where he supposedly met the then-unknown Marilyn Monroe, with whom he had a short love affair. Few years later, as we know, he supposedly worked for the SFPD (San Francisco Police Department), as a ghost-hunter, until the middle of the 60's. He then earned with his seminars and other activities enough money to live properly.

During the 60's LaVey had indeed gathered around him a group of "followers". Those people were attracted by LaVey's philosophy according to Blanche Barton and other Satanists (such as Peter H. Gilmore). But it seems rather that LaVey's success was certainly due to the taste for eccentricity and anti-conformism which were in vogue at that time. In the second half of the 20th century San Francisco was indeed the center of american counterculture: it was the point of convergence for the Beat Movement writers, Hippies, rock musicians, different other artists and particularly for the Gay Liberation movement. The success of LaVey's midnight seminars and their unconventional topics, is then not surprising.

LaVey Barton claims that people in the Magic Circle "*comprised an array of professions and pursuits: (...)artists, attorneys, doctors, writers, and law enforcement officers*". She mainly insists on one member: Dr. Cecil Nixon and his influence upon LaVey. Nixon (who is mainly known for his inventions, e.g. the automaton Isis) and LaVey shared a common taste for music, hypnotism and magic. LaVey attended Nixon's soirees, where he met musicians, actresses and various artists. Nixon's home's decorations certainly touched the imagination of LaVey when he bedecked his Black House. Nevertheless Nixon was much older than LaVey, and died in 1962 when he was 82 years old¹.

¹ Blanche Barton, *op. cit.* pp.71-74

The Magic Circle was aimed to perform rituals of black magic, LaVey pretended that owing to these rituals the people from the magic circle obtained results such as "*professional advances, unexpected rewards, monetary gains, sexual or romantic satisfaction, or the elimination of certain enemies*". They continued their activities until 1966...

In 1966, "*on the last night of April—Walpurgisnacht, the most important festival of the believers in witchcraft—LaVey shaved his head in the tradition of ancient executioners and announced the formation of the Church of Satan*"¹. The first "official" organization dedicated to the Devil.

LaVey declared "*1966 year One, Anno Satanas, the first year of the Age of Satan*". The Magic Circle turned into the core of this new organization.

The Church of Satan's chronicle:

The ceremony took place in the Black House and was rather a private one. But within a short time, the press of California was interested and a few articles about the Church of Satan were published. The journalists were interested in the blasphemy constituted by the first Church of Satan (even its name was a Blasphemy), LaVey's Black House and his house-pet: the nubian lion Togare, but they were wondering whether it was all a joke or whether they had to take him seriously.

LaVey received the Church's ceremonies every Friday night in the parlour of his House (the chamber that had previously been used for the rituals of the Magic Circle and LaVey's seminars). During the first year, rituals mainly consisted of parodies of the catholic mass directly inspired by the description of Huysmans's *Là bas*.

In October of the same year, the Church of Satan converted its most famous member, the actress Jayne Mansfield, both LaVey and Mansfield subsequently received a lot of publicity. Despite the fact that some detractors have tried to minimize the involvement of Jayne Mansfield with the Church of Satan, it seems rather that Mansfield really converted to Satanism.

On February the first, 1967, Anton LaVey was asked to perform a satanic wedding ceremony: the journalist John Raymond and Judith Case (heiress of a wealthy family from New York) wanted Anton to consecrate their union in the name of Satan. As Raymond and his bride were figures in the society, a huge amount of journalists crowded in the Black House for the ceremony. From this event the Church of Satan got a lot of publicity from the media, the press began to call LaVey the *Black Pope*.

On May the 23rd of the same year, LaVey performed the first satanic baptism: he "baptized" in the name of Satan his three year old girl Zeena in front of dozens of journalists.

In December, LaVey and Anger performed the first satanic funeral, of Edward Olsen, a Navy officer. He and his wife were members of the Church of Satan and she asserted that her husband wished his funeral to be satanic.

The Church of Satan got however some negative publicity: for example with the death of Jayne Mansfield in a car accident: LaVey was accused to be at the origin of her death; a rumor he has contributed to spread². Moreover the murders of the Charles Manson's family gave to the Church of Satan a bad publicity. One of the murderers, Susan Atkins, had indeed played in LaVey's Topless Witches' Review³, and later accused LaVey to have exercised an

¹ Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, Avon Books, New York, 1969, p.3.

² Cf. *Anton LaVey, the father of lies?*

³ A LaVey's entertaining show at a club in San Francisco involving half-naked girls, and which dealt with themes such as witchcraft and vampirism.

evil influence upon her. Bobby Beausoleil was the first member of the Family arrested (for the murder Gary Hinman), he was also a very good friend of Kenneth Anger and had even lived in LaVey's Black House for a while a few years before the murders. LaVey was nevertheless never incriminated, he had no direct involvement with the murders nor either has his so-called influence ever been proved.

In 1969, LaVey published his first book, The Satanic Bible, which has never been out of print and has sold over 600'000 copies worldwide. The Satanic Bible was followed in 1971 by The Compleat Witches, or what to do when virtue fails, a book about seduction, and in 1972 by The Satanic Rituals, which states the principle of rituals, but which does not faithfully describe the rituals as they were practised within the satanic ritual chambers¹.

The centre of the administration was the Black House, and most of the rituals took place there until 1972. However, at that time LaVey stopped opening his house for public rituals, because he was then afraid for his family. The house indeed had been the target of a few attacks from people opposed to the satanic Church. LaVey let people know (it was certainly untrue) that most of time he was not in San Francisco. At this point the satanic rituals came to be held in the *Grottos*. The first Grottos were founded around 1970, they were gathering points for Satanists and representatives of the central power (the Black House). About a dozen of Grottos were disseminated around the world, but mainly in US. Each one had a chief and the Satanists frequenting the Grottos were ranked in five degrees, where some corresponded to Catholic "ranks". Besides, the organization was said to be directed by a council of nine: *the Order of the Trapezoid*, but it seems rather that LaVey and his partner Diane, gathered all the power.

According to Michael A. Aquino, who was LaVey's right-hand man, but who is now an opponents to the Church of Satan, the number of people attending the satanic rituals in any Grotto was approximately five hundred. But not every member of the Church attended to the ceremonies and one became (this is still valid today) a member (for life) when he had paid an adhesion's fee. So, to the contrary of Aquino, Barton claims in her book that in 1969 more than ten thousand people had paid their adhesion's fee.

However, LaVey still faced some problems: one grotto (in Dayton) got involved with an affair of trafficking drugs and its chief was arrested, and then "ex-communicated". Some other Grottos were suppressed because of money's problems. So LaVey in 1975 dissolved the Grotto's system and turned the Church of Satan into a quasi-underground organization, whose members could practise Satanism on their own and contact LaVey for further information. The grades within the Church were given regarding to financial participation, or to "ennoble" someone (e.g. the rock star Marilyn Manson was given the title of satanic reverend in 1994). By doing this he broke up with his right-hand man Michael A. Aquino, who deemed the dissolution as a suicide. Aquino then has always been one of the strongest adversaries of LaVey, he founded in 1975 the Temple of Set (opposed to the Church of Satan) and a part of the Church of Satan's members and representatives followed him. Hereupon Aquino claimed (and still does) that this event marked the end of the Church of Satan. Effectively one did not hear much from LaVey and his organization for a while, but Aquino's organization had no more success.

In the 80's (during the satanic panic²), the Church of Satan was almost invisible. But the 90's (the rumors of the satanic conspiracy had then begun to fade away) announced the return of the "real" satanic movements³.

The revival of the Church of Satan was partly due to the actions of LaVey's new partner: Blanche Barton¹, who administered the organization in cooperation with LaVey, and

¹ In order not to shock.

² Cf. *LaVey's Satanic influence*

³ Introvigne, *op. cit.* pp.369-378.

to another figure of the Church: Peter H. Gilmore. Barton published a biography of LaVey in 1990, and she gave birth to LaVey's first son in 1993 : Satan Xerxes Carnacki LaVey.

LaVey published another book in 1992: The Devil's Notebook, with a preface by Kenneth Anger, which is a collection of essays and short stories.

LaVey was writing Satan Speaks, a gathering of essays on different issues, when he died in October the 31th (Halloween), 1997 in San Francisco from heart disease.

After a conflict between Karla LaVey, his oldest daughter and Blanche Barton, Karla received the rights on LaVey's works and Barton inherited the Church of Satan and became High Priestess. The Black House was destroyed in 2001, even if the Church of Satan had protested, because LaVey had had to sell it at the end of his life, for he had pecuniary problems. A friend of his had bought the house and lent it to him until his death, but refused to give it to LaVey's successors, who had not enough money to buy it.

In 2002, Barton appointed Peter H. Gilmore as High Priest, a role he has played until today.

LaVey's conception of Satan and Satanism, The Satanic Bible:

Whether or not the Church of Satan was at the beginning just another creation of a group of eccentric San Franciscans, after a few years it was still alive. More and more, the Church of Satan lost its image of an entertaining organization and presented itself as an organization with a philosophy and an "ethic":

*"Someone paid me a great compliment long ago" LaVey recalled, "when he said, about me: 'He's no fun any more'. That's when I knew I was getting somewhere. This was when the Church was two or three years old and I realized people were beginning to regard us as more than just fun and games."*²

LaVey had understood that his Church could be more than just "fun and games", and that he could get notoriety that way. So, as it matured, the Church of Satan was becoming more and more "serious". Nowadays, even if the Church of Satan's website and magazine give information on events on places like bars, clubs, etc., it especially emphasizes the satanic philosophy. It is no more a place just "to go to have fun", but it is an organization whose goal is to promote a sort of "philosophy".

Therefore this chapter will deal with LaVey's thought, and briefly with the principle and functions of rituals.

"What nearly everybody in my life (...) had misunderstood about Satanism was that it is not about ritual sacrifices, digging up graves and worshipping the devil. The devil doesn't exist. Satanism is about worshipping yourself, because you are responsible for your own good and evil".

—Marilyn Manson³

¹ In 1984, he and his previous partner Diane had split up after 24 years of life together.

² Barton, *op. cit.*, p.120.

³ Marilyn Manson (with Neil Strauss), *The long hard road out of hell*, Plexus, London, 1998. p.164.

This sentence is interesting in the sense that it shows the general idea of LaVey's philosophy. But also in the sense that Manson only refers to LaVey when he speaks of Satanism. We will see the influence LaVey has had on modern Satanism in the following chapter; first we will have a look on his conception of the Devil and on "his" Satanism.

LaVey claimed to have written the Satanic Bible in order to supply information about the satanic philosophy and ethic to a larger public than only the Church's members. But in fact, the idea of a Satanic Bible came from an editor, and it seemed that its first goal was to get publicity for the organization. So LaVey gathered small essays he had written about different issues on Satanism, added an introduction, one part about magic and ritual and the Enochian Keys. Thus the book is composed of four parts: the book of Satan, the book of Lucifer, the book of Belial and the book of Leviathan (the four crown princes of Hell according to LaVey). The Books of Satan and Lucifer expose the philosophy and the books of Belial and Leviathan explain the principles of magic and rituals. In the Book of Satan, Satan himself seems to have the floor. It is however never mentioned that the words have been somehow inspired by a supernatural force: they could come from LaVey. The Book of Lucifer, which contains 12 chapters on different issues (like Satanic Sex, or the Black Mass), is in fact the assemblage of the rainbow sheets (essays).

At the very beginning of the book, LaVey affirms that within this book the reader will find true black magic. He claims to have written The Satanic Bible *"because, with very few exceptions, every tract and paper, every 'secret' grimoire, all the 'great works' on the subject of magic, are nothing more than sanctimonious fraud—guilt ridden ramblings and esoteric gibberish by chroniclers of magical lore unable or unwilling to present an objective view of the subject."*¹ LaVey also claims that The Satanic Bible contains the real satanic thought, as it was practised by some characters in history. Figures like the 20th century's arms trader Basil Zaharoff or the 18th century's occultist Cagliostro. Zaharoff was an arm merchant, who sold weapons in the Boer War, Japanese-Russian War and World War I. Zaharoff was an expert of corruption, and often sold arms to both sides in a war. Cagliostro was an Italian occultist freemason and charlatan. He claimed to be a few thousand years old, to be able to see the dead, and he sold potions that supposedly prolonged one's life. He became famous as a magician in Paris and lived wealthily until his arrest in Rome by the Inquisition in 1789. These two characters, according to LaVey, were true black magicians, and practised real Satanism (without calling it Satanism). Effectively as LaVey would say, they were part of an elite and filled their desires, mainly because of their capacity to manipulate and to use unconventional and reprehensible methods to reach their goal.

LaVey indeed claimed that true Satanism was practised by people from the elite everywhere in the world and that he had himself written The Satanic Bible because otherwise, *"someone maybe less qualified would have done it"*². One can observe here that LaVey claims that Satanism is a philosophy that deals with Man's nature (we will develop this aspect later, when we will be describing his ideas). Satanists are then an alien elite who live accordingly to their nature (they are an elite in that sense).

For these reasons, LaVey does not claim in The Satanic Bible to have created Satanism (or a new Satanism), but claims to have codified a pre-existent way of living (according Man's nature) into a "philosophy".

This philosophy as we are going to see now is a philosophy of *"objective subjectivity"*³, which rejects the existence of God: for a Satanist there is no other God than the Satanist himself.

¹ LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, op. cit. P.21.

² The Church of Satan's official website.

³ Anton LaVey, *The most powerful religion*, on the Church of Satan's website.

The Satanic Bible begins thus with the Nine Satanic Statements, which synthesize the satanic philosophy and define the figure of Satan¹:

- "1) Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!*
- 2) Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams!*
- 3) Satan represents undefiled wisdom, instead of hypocritical self-deceit!*
- 4) Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it, instead of love wasted on ingrates!*
- 5) Satan represents vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek!*
- 6) Satan represents responsibility to the responsible, instead of concern in psychic vampires!*
- 7) Satan represents Man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," have become the most animal of all!*
- 8) Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification!*
- 9) Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, as he kept it in business all these years!"*

LaVey explains the basic principles of his philosophy by describing a character that endorses all its main aspects. This character is Satan. There, one could question: "is the association of Satan with his philosophy coherent?" But in my opinion this question is not relevant, in the sense that it suggests that a fixed and dogmatic representation of Satan exists. And as we saw in Part I (except the Christian representation), Satan in history donned many forms and had different symbolisms depending on the place and the period. A better question in my opinion would be: "why did LaVey choose Satan to represent his philosophy, and so how did LaVey figure Him?" And then it would be possible to compare this representation with others that we have seen in Part I.

In order to answer these questions, I will first briefly present LaVey's "ethic", and then I will focus on the character of Satan, His nature and symbolism.

LaVey's Satanism denies the existence of any God. For him, Man is the result of evolution, and therefore Man has a carnal nature. And effectively what LaVey advocates coincides with this definition. As Man is just another animal and lives only here and now (on earth), LaVey vindicates egoism and hedonism.

The first statement summarizes LaVey's "ethic": *"indulgence instead of abstinence"*. LaVey indeed *"advocates indulging in each of the [Christian seven deadly] sins as they all lead to mental, physical, or emotional gratification"*². For example, LaVey stands for radical

¹ LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, op. cit. P.25.

² *Ibid.* p.46.

sexual freedom, "in the true sense of the word" ¹. That is to say the choice to be either faithful to one person or to have many partners. Moreover, LaVey "encourages any forms of sexual expressions you may desire, so long as it hurts no one." ²

Beside this, LaVey also advocates the law of the jungle, (or Social Darwinism): "death to the weakling, wealth to the strong" ³, and "vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek!"

In addition to the Satanic Bible, LaVey published in the late 80's *The Eleven Satanic Rules of the Earth*, *The Nine Satanic Sins* and *The Pentagonal Revisionism: a five points program* ⁴. *The Eleven Satanic Rules of the Earth* are kinds of Satanic moral codes. *The Nine Satanic Sins* present the kinds of behaviour which a Satanist scorns the most and should absolutely not adopt. However these two writings seem to be in contradiction with, or at least mitigate the principle of Social Darwinism. *The Pentagonal Revisionism* was written to express clearly the "concrete" goals of the Church of Satan.

Actually, even if as Peter Gilmore said, LaVey "acknowledges his own faculties and understanding of human beings to synthesize the Satanic Bible" ⁵, he also recognizes that his Satanic philosophy has been mostly influenced by the philosophy of Ayn Rand (1905-1982), even if they had probably never met. Rand was a Russian-born American writer. Few of her novels such as *The Fountainhead* or *Atlas Shrugged* were best-sellers. Her novels' aim was to present her philosophy: Objectivism, which is an extreme individualistic philosophy that vindicates capitalism and egoism and scorns such notions as altruism and sacrifices for the common good. Rand thus elevated the pursuit of self-interest to the role of first principle ⁶.

Beside Rand, LaVey acknowledges the work of Nietzsche as a source of influence (particularly his concept of the *superhuman*), and also Ragnar Redbeard's work *Might is Right* (Ragnar Redbeard was the pseudonym of the New Zealander Arthur Desmond). This book is, according to Michael A. Aquino, "an obscure, turn-of-the-century political tract" ⁷ which vindicates Social Darwinism. Until 1987, it was not discovered that *The Book of Satan* was in fact just a plagiarism of a section of *Might is Right* (LaVey has never acknowledged his sources): LaVey had just withdrawn racialism allusions and added diabolical references of his own.

However, none of these authors was particularly interested in the figure of Satan.

Now that we have an idea of LaVey's "philosophy", we can ask ourselves, why is Satan associated with such "humanistic" ideas?

First of all, we must know what is the nature of Satan according to LaVey. The main adversary of LaVey, Michael Aquino, pretends that LaVey at the beginning of the Church of Satan believed in the real existence of the Devil (as an exterior being), but suddenly changed his opinion about the nature of Satan in 1975, at the time of the schism: "As this history should make abundantly clear, there is no question of Anton LaVey's convictions concerning his literal High Priesthood [and therefore no doubts about the existence of Satan] during the 1966-1975 period" ⁸. To prove his claim he presents testimonies of people that knew LaVey at the time, which seem credible, but are no proof.

¹ *Ibid.* p.66

² *Ibid.* p.69.

³ *Ibid.* p.30.

⁴ Cf. Bibliography.

⁵ LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, *op. cit.* pp. 9-10.

⁶ Ayn Rand, in *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2004. And Introvigne, *op. cit.* P.265.

⁷ Micheal Aquino, *op. cit.* p.52.

⁸ Micheal Aquino, *op. cit.* p.53.

Today Satanists are still divided by their conception of Satan: some hold Satan as a symbol of freedom (as the Church of Satan does today), but some others think Satan exists (even if they don't obligatorily picture Him as He is defined by the Christians)¹. Nonetheless, today, the Church of Satan (and especially its new High Priest, Peter Gilmore) insists on the fact that Satan is just a symbol of the "superior" and an "accomplished" Man, present in every Satanist individual. This symbolism of Satan, as we will see, seems coherent with what LaVey exposes in The Satanic Bible.

In The Satanic Bible, Satan endorses some characteristics, which I will try to outline there and try to link with currents, authors ..etc. which we saw in Part I.

As we saw God does not exist according to LaVey, and Man has a carnal nature. Therefore, Satan is the symbol of opposition against most of Christian dogmas, as they are falsehoods. Satan represents also all these natural needs. Satan here becomes a positive force, or motivation, which is present in each individual, but which is repressed in many (individuals) by their religious (Christian) "morality".

It is first interesting to notice here that Satan is no more depicted as only pure evil, as He had been in the classical Christian representation. Some journalists and academics attacked LaVey on this point, asking why LaVey called his philosophy "Satanism". For example J. B. Russel in his great study of Satanism states that LaVey's conception of Satan (not as pure evil) is contradictory and therefore that modern Satanism is a contradiction in itself. However, as we saw in Part I, Satan in the modern times suggests much more than only pure evil. Actually, this representation of a positive Satan looks like the Romantic symbolism. Moreover the similarities between LaVey's representation and the Romantic one becomes even more evident when we look on some other aspects of the figure of Satan, for example "rebellion". Effectively, for LaVey the Devil represents rebellion and freedom against the "morality" of Christian establishment. This is obvious within the *Nine Satanic Statements*: all of them begin with the word *Satan*, who is associated with one of His so-called characteristics. In many statements, Satan's characteristic is then set off against its "Christian" counterpart (e.g. *"indulgence instead of abstinence"* and *"vengeance instead of turning the other cheek"*). This opposition to God and to the constraints of Christian establishment, is not unlike the Romantic description of an Angel who is revolted against an unfair God. However, one must notice the fundamental distinctions between the Romantic Movement and LaVey on the subject of Satan: LaVey does not believe in an exterior (Christian) God and Devil, but on the contrary he has "adopted" the vision of an interior Devil.

What is interesting is that LaVey here takes one of Freud's definitions of Satan that we saw in Part I:

*"Pour nous, les démons sont des désirs mauvais, réprouvés, découlant d'impulsions repoussées, refoulées".*²

These impulses (or natural needs) are repressed by the Christian morality of the individual (the superior self). But as for LaVey, Christianity represents falsehood; there is no reason to consider these pulsions as bad. Therefore LaVey pretends that Satanism *"fills the large grey void between religion and psychiatry"*³, in the sense that it is supposedly a religion close to psychiatry (close in their process of suppressing the sentiment of guilt that usually accompanies natural impulses).

¹ James R. Lewis, *Who serves Satan? A Demographic and Ideological Profile*, in Marburg Journal of Religion, volume 6, N°2, June 2001. For the link on the internet: cf. bibliography.

² Sigmund Freud, *op. cit.* p.214.

³ LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, *op. cit.* p.53.

This links with psychiatry, now leads me to underline the resemblance between LaVey's vision of Satan and Crowley's ideas (as we saw in Part I, these resemblances were certainly due to the influence of Kenneth Anger on LaVey). It is interesting to mention that Crowley held the spirits he called forth as part of his subconscious ("secret self"), which is not unlike LaVey's representation of Satan. Moreover, LaVey here has taken back Crowley's argument towards the Satanists who worship the Devil as He is described in the Bible: accusing those Satanists to be just Christian in disguise.

In the principle and function of rituals, LaVey has been certainly inspired by Crowley. Before I begin, I just want to make clear that in this study I do not examine the process of the ritual, but just its functions and principles. Today, Peter H. Gilmore affirms that the rituals do not imply the calling forth of supernatural forces, but are only psycho dramatic representations, whose goal is to release an individual from his emotional tensions and his worries. For example, the ritual of the Black Mass is aimed to release an individual from his Christian thoughts and feelings. In this sense the satanic rituals of the Church of Satan look like Crowley's invocation of spirits (which are in fact just part of his subconscious), in order to reach a particular state of mind or state of feeling¹.

LaVey would have totally agreed with Gilmore's claim that satanic rituals do not imply the invocations of supernatural forces. However, for LaVey, the first definition of magic is slightly different: magic is *"the change in situations or events in accordance with one's will, which would, using normally accepted methods, be unchangeable"*². And even if in many cases this just implies an effort of the only individual (like the definition given by Gilmore), for some great rituals (like destruction ritual) it implies the help of a dark force. This force which *"permeates and motivates the universe"* is not supernatural, but has just not yet been proven by science.

Today, some Satanists³ pretend that this force represented Satan for LaVey; associating this force, with the force that runs within all human beings (that is to say the carnal nature of Man).

To conclude, for LaVey Satan is a symbol: He symbolizes the Satanist, a so-called superior Man, who is freed from Christianity and its false "morality" and dogmas, accepts that he is basically an animal and so enjoys an hedonistic life on earth ; so Satan also symbolizes self-fulfillment and therefore egoism ; Social Darwinism is then a consequence of this egoism. On the other hand Satan is sometime associated with a mysterious "dark force" that is used in some magic rituals.

To answer now to the question I asked at the beginning of the chapter: LaVey responded to those who asked him why he called his philosophy *Satanism*, that finally, for he had chosen to embody what people usually called *Satan*, he would take also the name.

To notice and describe LaVey's "voluntary" embodiment of Satan, is in my opinion fundamental to understand Satanism, in the sense that doing so *he embodied people's fears*. In the next chapter, we will see that this embodiment of people's fears is a feature shared by all satanic groups.

¹ CBC, the Hour, Interviews of Peter H. Gilmore by George Stroumbouloupoulos, June the 6th, 2006. And TheResistanceManifesto.com, Interview of Peter Gilmore by John Conner. Cf. Bibliography for the links on the internet.

² *Ibid.* p.110

³ Lewis 2001.

LaVey's satanic influence:

As we said in the introduction, LaVey's works have influenced much of the new satanic groups today and it is also impossible to skip the fact that LaVey has been accused by many to have an evil influence upon teenagers through his Satanic Bible. So here I will briefly deal with these two important points: LaVey's influence upon other organized groups of Satanists, and his influence upon teenagers and "savage Satanism".

I will first discuss the influence of LaVey on the multiple new organized satanic groups, with the help of two articles by James R. Lewis¹.

Actually, LaVey is at the origin of the main current among the satanic organizations. Especially since 1975, but even before, the Church of Satan has frequently endured small schisms. The "separatists" often left The Church of Satan in order to form another concurrent organization, with ideas slightly different from LaVey's. Even if some of them disappeared quite quickly because they had only sporadic members, some subsisted, and in addition others were formed by non-Church-of-Satan members. The result is that nowadays there exist multiple (impossible to know exactly their number) small satanic organizations.

For his study on modern Satanism, Lewis sent by e-mail a questionnaire of basic questions to about 140 Satanists from all horizons. It appeared that most of the respondents were Satanists for many years already, which means that they had adopted Satanism as "*a mature religious option*". Most of the respondents (about 60%) believed in Satan in a non-theistic way, that is to say they considered Him a symbol. To the question of Lewis: "*How did you become a Satanist?*", some respondents simply said that they had read the Satanic Bible. Moreover, Lewis discovered that modern Satanists quote the Satanic Bible "*to legitimate particular positions as well as to de-legitimate the positions of other Satanists*". That shows the importance of LaVey's influence upon modern Satanism. As Lewis, we can almost say that LaVey founded a *Satanist Tradition*. This fact is very surprising if we consider LaVey's satanic ideology:

The sociologist Max Weber explained the process of Ideology in terms of legitimation of authority². In our case, LaVey legitimates Satanism as a true philosophy pretending it is based on science and reason. And as Lewis explains in his article, today science tends to be given "*a level of respect and prestige enjoyed by few other social institutions - to the point where, as a number of observers have pointed out, science has come to be viewed quasi-religiously*". LaVey used this strategy to criticize spiritual religions from the "*secularist world-view derived from natural science*". However, what is interesting, is that The Satanic Bible which stands against Christian moral dogmas and which preaches reason, is today becoming more and more a reference about Satanism for most of the new modern groups of Satanists. In other words, The Satanic Bible which stands for rationality against dogmas and authoritative scriptures is *itself* becoming a satanic authoritative scripture! As if aiming to be an enemy to Christianity, Satanism unconsciously reproduces Judeo-Christian characteristic and schemes of authoritative scriptures³.

¹ James R. Lewis, *Diabolical Authority: Anton LaVey, The Satanic Bible and the Satanist "Tradition"*, in Marburg Journal of Religion, volume 7, N°1, September 2002. And Lewis 2001, *op. cit.* For the link on the internet: cf. bibliography.

² Lewis, 2002, *op. cit.*

³ *Ibid.*

To discuss now about "savage satanism", that is to say Satanism as it is practised by non-organized groups of teenagers, I will use once again Introvigne's book, and a book by David Frankfurter about rumours of Satanic Conspiracies¹.

First of all, in order to have a better understanding of the problem of "savage Satanism", I have to talk about the what occurred in America during the 80's: "the satanic panic", or the rumors of an international satanic conspiracy².

This "satanic panic" was engendered by the story of the "survivors" who pretended that, because of their psychotherapy, they remembered to have been abused during their childhood by a sect of Satanists. Michelle remembers was published in 1980 and was the first book of a "survivor", and marked the beginning of the satanic panic. According to Introvigne, the satanic panic had been preceded by the movement "*anti-sect*", which had taken place during the 70's. The satanic panic that took place in the US can be compared, writes Introvigne, to the witchcraft's processes at the end of the Middle-Ages. One must notice that the "panic" not only seized some religious, but laic psychiatrists also believed in the "survivors" stories. Michelle remembers was just the first "survivors" story and was followed by many others. The "survivors" not only published their stories into books, but also appeared on TV's talk shows, and gave public conferences on the subject, etc.

Some survivors described an enormous (international) underground satanic plot, which performed satanic ritual abuse on children. They supposedly imprisoned young women, *the breeders*, whose role was to procreate. The babies' births were then not declared to the authority, hence they could be sacrificed without anybody knowing.

The problem for the survivors was that no proof could be found about their claims, as they supposedly remembered events that had taken place 30 years before. However, in the middle of the 80's, some psychiatrists announced that some children (their patients) complained about satanic ritual abuse, in nursery schools or even in their own family. These cases often led to police inquiries and a lawsuit. By the end of the 80's, there were thousands of cases of so-called ritual child abuse. But the people accused were never condemned and the existence of a satanic plot had never been proved. In fact, most often these children, according to Introvigne, had been influenced by their psychiatrists who believed in a satanic conspiracy, and so either invented their stories, or in most of the cases, probably added some satanic elements and practises to real non-satanic abuses. Introvigne however, mentioned that it might have been a phantasm for some pedophiles to use satanic symbols (as described in stories of survivors) in child abuse.

The satanic panic lost its credibility in 1989, when the CSER (Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion) published a report that totally discredited the existence of a satanic conspiracy, and discredited the scientific competences of the people that believed in it. But even if every serious scholars have denied the existence of the conspiracy, the American society has nevertheless been marked by these rumors and by the descriptions of the Satanists and their rituals.

One must here see the difference between the satanic conspiracy and "savage Satanism": the conspiracy was supposedly an well-organized group of adult worshipping the Devil (usually the Devil from the Bible) and abusing and sacrificing children. On the other hand, "savage Satanism" is a form of Satanism practised by revolted teenagers. The existence of such (small) groups is indisputable.

LaVey has hardly never been accused to be part of the international conspiracy (during the 80's, he did what he could to contradict these rumors), but has often been accused to

¹ David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate, Rumours of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New-Jersey, 2006. p.198-202 and p.221-222.

² Introvigne, *op. cit.*, pp.310-366.

seduce teenagers and incite them to violence. It is a fact that there exists in America and in Europe many groups of teenagers wearing dark clothes, long black hair and make-up and calling themselves Satanists. For Frankfurter, in contemporary Euro-American cultures, religious morality can often be seen as *"an oppressive force in everyday life and a rejectable option"*, while there also exists a *"freedom to develop publicly deviant subcultures"*. To shock, some teenagers adopt radical symbolic clothing, accoutrements and behaviour that suggest morbidity, and form so-called satanic groups. Those teenagers that enact such images do so because of their social conditions: usually they are marginal, they are *"youth conscious of their own deviance in the local community"*, because they experienced it either in their school, family or sexual life¹.

It is not surprising that a marginalized teenager who is searching for an identity could be seduced by Satanism. By becoming a Satanist, he can supposedly gain power and membership to a group that is the elite (as promises LaVey). Introvigne explains that an adolescent generally learns about Satanism by the medias like TV, cinema and music. While cinema can give them taste for morbidity and horror, some rock bands define themselves as Satanists. These rock bands, not unlike TV, newspapers and especially the internet can provide them with information on organized Satanism. It is then not difficult for them to find further information about the satanic ideology on the internet or by purchasing LaVey's books (in the US you can find them for less than \$10 in every big book-store). Some of them even try to reproduce rituals at home or in cemeteries (those groups often gather in cemeteries), often with the uses of drugs and sometimes with the ceremony degenerating into an orgy. Many times such groups have been accused to commit acts of vandalism (on churches eg.) or even crimes. These crimes have often been imputed to their satanic beliefs (especially by religion), although it is always very difficult to know whether the motive is purely "religious", or whether it is something else (due to other factors such as drugs' traffic)².

However, one must admit that LaVey never directly incited to break the law (he invites to respect the law), moreover, most of the individuals or small groups have no contact with the "official" satanic organizations. But on the other hand, psychological studies about youth's Satanism conclude that LaVey's social Darwinism and denial of moral codes can have an impact on young disoriented teenagers³. Introvigne also adds that about five thousands of teenagers in America and about the same number in Europe belong to these groups.

For Frankfurter, who tries to analyse the phenomenon, there is no doubt that these adolescents hear or have heard rumours about satanic conspiracy and witness(ed) the terror it can engender to certain people. And so when they perform "Satanism" in public ("perform" here means behave and be dressed in a way that denotes Satanism) they provoke reactions of fear, disgust and repulsion. These reactions are *"enjoyed by the group as a source of power"* (power to be able to produce them at will). For the believers in a satanic conspiracy, those groups and the acts of vandalism and crimes they exceptionally committed confirm the existence and the dangerousity of a satanic plot.

What is amazing is that the teenagers unconsciously play with this obsessive fear of a conspiracy and with the border of what is acceptable in their society. They indeed feed the rumours and signs *"on which the Satanism panic are based"*. *"They seek to be visually what society fears the most"*. In that aspect, their behaviour and accoutrements are directly linked to the social myths of satanic conspiracy in the dominant culture. That is to say that they try to embody the myth⁴ (to be more frightful), and thus they parody the fears of their society. As

¹ Frankfurter, *op. cit.*, p.198-200.

² Introvigne, *op. cit.*, p.355-358.

³ Introvigne, *op. cit.*, p.356.

⁴ However that doesn't make the myth come true.

Frankfurter summaries: *"They derive both power and group fulfilment from enacting the starkest cultural notions of evil"*¹.

The organized satanic movements such as the Church of Satan use the same tool, maybe at a lower scale (LaVey invites to respect the law and his formula for The Church of Satan was 9 parts social respectability and 1 part outrage), to get recognition; that is to say to be feared and respected. In addition, the fact that LaVey had been accused to have an evil influence, made him seem even more frightful in the eye of people. According to Frankfurter, the stratagem of these groups shows that some people in the society have understood that *"the myths have great power, great danger, even an oppressiveness, and that one can play with the symbols, imaginatively and theatrically, if one is willing to accept some ostracism"*².

Anton LaVey: the Father of Lies?

As we saw in the previous chapters, the Church of Satan's first goal today is to promote their "philosophy", that they grant for serious. But on the other side, the Church of Satan cannot be "reduced" only to its "philosophy": there something theatrical in LaVey and his followers' behavior as Satanists, that cannot be ignored in our study.



Throughout his life, LaVey has indeed always been closely connected to the show business' world. As we saw, when he was 16 LaVey left home to work in a circus. There he formed long-time friendships with clown for example. During this period, he also got familiar with the "big cats".

After the circus he worked as a musician in clubs and bar in San Francisco. In his biography, Blanche Barton relates how LaVey met with Marilyn Monroe who worked as a stripper in the "Mayans", a night-club in Los Angeles where LaVey worked as a musician. They supposedly had a short relationship and even lived together during a few weeks. However, the journalist Lawrence Wright, who inquired into LaVey's life, proved that LaVey

¹ Frankfurter, op. cit. p.198-202 and p.221-222.

² Frankfurter, op. cit., p.222.

Image: LaVey (on the right) and his friends from the circus: Lou Jacobs, the clown, and Jimmy Armstrong, the midget.

probably never met Marilyn Monroe: Marilyn's agent (questioned by Wright) had never heard about LaVey; Wright also proved that in fact neither LaVey nor Marilyn ever worked in that night club at that time...etc¹.

However it is sure that LaVey has had many relationships with people from the show business. For example Kenneth Anger who, more than being a member of the Church of Satan, even made a film about the Devil: Invocation of my demon brother (1969), into which LaVey played the role of Satan.

Jayne Mansfield's involvement with the Church of Satan is also undeniable. LaVey and Mansfield kept in touch until her death in June 1967. Her fame brought a lot of success to the Church. As we can see on the picture, LaVey knew how to tickle the journalists!



The Satanists got also publicity when Polanski's Rosemary's Baby was released in 1968. The movie contains a few allusions to the Church of Satan: in the movie the Satanists declare 1966 as year one of the reign of the

Devil, and yelled "Hail Satan". Both are of course allusions to the Church of Satan. LaVey claimed to have been requested by the producers as a consultant and even to have played the role of Satan². It certainly contributed to the success of the Church of Satan with the media.

Finally we can consider the involvement of Sammy Davis Jr. and of the rock star Marilyn Manson, who were both famous members of the



Church of Satan. Marilyn Manson was even given the title of Priest of Satan.

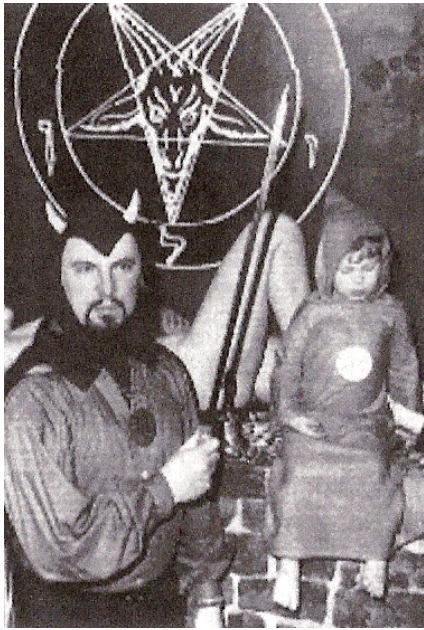
Considering LaVey's close connection to the world of the show business it is not surprising to find in the rituals and the ceremonies of the Church of Satan a sort of theatricalism. During the first years of the Church, LaVey performed "sensational" ceremonies that were aimed to shock and to get publicity.



¹ Introvigne, *op. cit.* pp.259-260.

² It is affirmed by lots of articles about LaVey, but the name of LaVey never appears in the casting's list nor as a consultant.

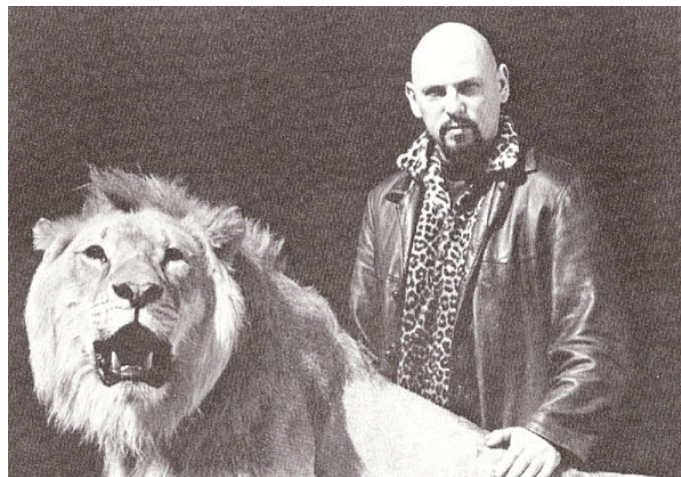
Images: Anton LaVey, disguised in Satan and posing with Jayne Mansfield ; Marilyn Manson and Anton LaVey in the Black House, in 1994 ; the first Satanic wedding in the ritual's chamber of the Black House



Into these, LaVey did not hesitate to put on a disguise: horns, a sword...etc. These ceremonies were parodies of christian ceremonies: LaVey performed a satanic wedding, satanic funerals, and baptized his little girl, Zeena, in the name of Satan: *"With her soft blond hair and engaging smile, she captivated reporters with the image of such an angelic child being dedicated to the Devil"*. The ceremony was aimed to *"glorify her natural instincts and intensify her lust for life"*. *"Christian's organizations were outraged at the spectacle"* as reports Blanche Barton, but *"there was little they could do"* at that time¹.



More than just by these ceremonies, the journalists were also attracted by LaVey's unusual way of living. His house for example was famous, because all black-painted. LaVey also kept a lion as a house-pet, Togare. No doubts that it contributed to his reputation of a black magician and Satanist.



¹ Barton, *op. cit.* p. 89-91.

Images: Anton and Zeena during her satanic baptism (in the ritual chamber) ; Edward Olsen's Satanic funerals: the man in the back is Kenneth Anger ; The Black House of 6114 California Street ; LaVey and his house-pet lion Togare.

Thus, as LaVey summarized it, the Church of Satan was supposed to shock (moderately) and *"smash all concepts of what a church should be. This was a temple of indulgence instead of a temple of abstinence (...). We [especially himself] didn't want it to be an unforgiving, unwelcoming place, but a place where you could go to have fun"*¹.

But LaVey wasn't probably content about his reputation, and so contributed in his biographies to create a kind of legend about his life. LaVey's two biographies² have indeed been revised by LaVey himself; moreover the author of the second one was LaVey's last partner, Blanche Barton! So of course we cannot trust their objectivity.

Into Barton's book *The secret life of a Satanist*, we can read many surprising stories about LaVey's life before the creation of the Church of Satan, and some anecdotes about his life ulteriorly. For example Barton claims that the newborn LaVey bore a kind of small tail, due to a deformity of his last vertebra. This deformation supposedly disappeared a few years later.

Barton also recounts how LaVey put curses on different people. For example when Jayne Mansfield and her attorney and friend Sam Brody were killed in a car accident everybody agreed to say that Brody hated LaVey and some rumours said that LaVey had cursed Brody, giving his word that he was going to die within a year. When asked, LaVey confirmed the rumours. Barton explains it in her book: Brody had supposedly touched and broken some material used for curses and destruction rituals, and that incident caused the Devil's malediction.

As another example, Barton writes that in 1969 LaVey was invited by Lou Gordon to appear on his *"hot television show in Detroit"*³. During the show, *"Gordon ridiculed LaVey's odd beliefs"*. Back in San Francisco LaVey wrote *"a formal curse on blood-red Church of Satan stationary and sent it to Mr. Gordon, who read it on his next broadcast, laughing and scoffing. Gordon died within a year"*.

Some people indeed consider LaVey the most dangerous man on earth: that is due of course to his activity as High Priest of the Church of Satan, but also to his natural charisma, and to his fictitious life, who both contributed to his reputation. In his autobiography⁴, the rock star Marilyn Manson writes:

"All the power LaVey wielded he gained through fear—the public's fear of a word: Satan. By telling people he was a Satanist, LaVey became Satan in their eyes—which is not unlike my attitude toward becoming a rock star."

As we have seen in this chapter, LaVey *fed* people's fears and *played the role* of the Black Pope, in a way that, as Manson emphasizes, evokes that one which is used in the show business' world. That contributed a lot to his fame. But it also gave some arguments to his detractors, who have accused him to be an impostor.

¹ Blanche Barton, *op. cit.* p.89

² Burton H. Wolf, *The Devil's Avenger. A biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, Pyramid Books, New York, 1974. (now out of print) ; Blanche Barton, *op. cit.*

³ Blanche Barton, *op. cit.* p.197

⁴ Marilyn Manson (with Neil Strauss), *op. cit.* p.165-168.

Conclusion

As a conclusion we ask ourselves the question, who was really Anton Szandor LaVey? The *New Yorker's* journalist Lawrence Wright declared about him:

*"Quand il est question d'Anton LaVey, il y a trois possibilités. La plus probable, c'est qu'il soit un faussaire complet. Il est possible aussi qu'il soit un psychotique tourmenté par de grandes illusions. La possibilité la plus inquiétante, toutefois, c'est qu'il soit vraiment le diable incarné — peut-être sans même le savoir."*¹

LaVey's character is indeed ambiguous, as this statement makes it clear. As a personal conclusion I am going to give my opinion about him. I think that LaVey was intelligent enough to use people fear to his own interest, so yes in a way he was a manipulator. But I would not totally agree with someone who would pretend that he is just an impostor, for two reasons.

The first one is that it is amazing to notice that ironically LaVey precisely admired figures such as Basil Zaharoff and Cagliostro: "impostors" who knew how to manipulate people and how to take advantage of their superstitions. LaVey added that these two (and especially their conducts) were really satanic! That is to say that in LaVey's eye, manipulation and falsehood are somehow part of what makes someone be satanic.

Secondly, the question of being an impostor is a non-sense if we consider that anyway his organization has a Bible, a charismatic figure as leader and a tradition. For this reason we cannot simply dismiss LaVey as an impostor. Furthermore his movement has also some importance because, as Introvigne writes, LaVey is, with very few exceptions, at the origin of all the modern satanic organizations. He adds that these would probably not exist without him.

One of my professor once asked me the question: is the Church of Satan coherent? He meant coherent with what can be expected from a Church dedicated to the Devil. But the problem is that it necessarily depends on our vision of the Devil. If we consider the *traditional image of the Devil*: the notion of coherence would then be related to the way the Church of Satan opposes (by definition) to the established Church. Then the answer would be no, in the sense that the Church of Satan reproduces all the working schemes of the Christian Church. But as I have repeated many times in my study, the image of Satan is not dogmatic in popular imagery.

So instead of asking the question of its "coherence", I will rather briefly talk about the image of Satan carried by LaVey. Which is a more relevant question in regard to his importance today concerning the new satanic groups. Doing so I am going to synthesize what I have been doing all throughout my study.

From a general point of view, the Church of Satan can be looked at as an "indicator" of the "popular perception" of the Devil: the fact that the existence of a satanic Church has been accepted in the american "modern" society shows that the fears inspired by the Devil have regressed in our century. In my opinion the character of Satan has lost some of his "powers" in our modern times: he doesn't only represents pure evil, but more and more He shows positive characteristics, such as sexual freedom...etc.

¹ Lawrence Wright, *Saint & Sinners*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993, p.121.

Nevertheless Satan as pure evil of course still exists for some part of the population. To the other he has been replaced in his role by figures such as Adolf Hitler. That is to say that the image of the Devil is ambiguous today.

LaVey has played with this ambiguity and has founded his Church upon it. This is the reason why it is difficult to "classify" LaVey's Church of Satan: LaVey used the fear still inspired by the word Satan, that is to say the "darker" connotation of the term. But on the other side, in his "philosophy" Satan doesn't seem so terrible, and finally his Church thrives as a rather sympathetic and entertaining organization

Finally, in my opinion it is very difficult to conclude about LaVey's real personality, because he had certainly never solved this ambiguity about himself. But the fact that he kept the same convictions until his death shows that if he were not somehow a psychotic, he was then really a perseverant fraud!

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Thanks:

Thanks to Christelle for the loan of her documents on the history of Satanism.

Thanks to my mother for having read some parts of my work and for her advices for my conclusion

Special thanks to Sue for having read my work and corrected my english mistakes

Special thanks to Sébastien Graber for having chosen to direct my work, for his interest and for his advices

Special thanks to Youri Volokhine for his worthy recommendations and the loan of his books and articles

Special thanks to my father for his readings of some part of my work, for his critics, for the loan of his books